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## 1980-1989 Highlights

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### 1980 Highlights

- Center for Environmental Health is established. It includes the former Environmental Health Services Division, Bureau of State Services; Chronic Disease Division, Bureau of Epidemiology; and Clinical Chemistry Division, Bureau of Laboratory.
- Spearheads the federal public health response to the eruption of the Mt. St. Helens volcano in Washington.
- Investigates a cluster of metabolic alkalosis among infants. Results (1) show that the cause is an infant formula deficient in chloride and (2) lead to the passage of the Infant Formula Act.
- Begins studies of 12 waste sites that are potential sources of human exposure to [PCB \(80-89hst.htm#PCB\)](#) s. Results show that, in general, living near the sites did not lead to increased serum levels of PCBs.
- Studies people who live in log cabins treated with pentachlorophenol and finds excessive blood levels of the toxicant. Pentachlorophenol was phased out of commercial products.
- As a special project for the Secretary, [HHS \(80-89hst.htm#HHS\)](#) , determines the amount of paraquat in marijuana.
- Serves as central laboratory for [NHANES \(80-89hst.htm#NHANES\)](#) . These surveys provide extensive information for public health practitioners and researchers. NHANES III will end in 1994.
- Through the [BDMP \(80-89hst.htm#BDMP\)](#) , monitors one million births for U.S. trends in birth defects.

- Develops 12 analytic methods for measuring toxic metals in blood and urine, applies these methods to exposure and health studies, and publishes reports on the results. Program began in 1978.
- Develops and operates national quality assurance programs for state laboratories that use dried blood spots to screen for metabolic disorders. Examples include congenital hypothyroidism (1976), phenylketonuria (1983), galactosemia (1988), and maple syrup urine disease (1991). Ongoing program since 1976.
- Assigned responsibilities under [CERCLA \(80-89hst.htm#CERCLA\)](#) (Superfund).
- Standardizes cholesterol measurements for about 20 major epidemiologic studies and clinical trials that identified cholesterol as a significant risk factor for coronary heart disease (1971-1990).
- Serves as the central laboratory for the Early Treatment of Diabetic Retinopathy Study being conducted by [NEI \(80-89hst.htm#NEI\)](#) (1978-1988).

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## 1981 Highlights

- At the request of the Spanish government, assists with the investigation into [TOS \(80-89hst.htm#TOS\)](#) . Results show that aniline concentrations in rapeseed oils were highly correlated with illness-related oil.
- Assigned responsibility for devising plans to implement the health aspects of the Superfund legislation.
- Studies Bendectin. Results indicate that this antinausea medication does not cause birth defects.
- Begins study of Vietnam veterans' risk of fathering babies with birth defects. Results published in 1984.
- Publishes a method for measuring pentachlorophenol in blood.
- Publishes results of a study of human exposure to DDT in Triana, Alabama. Found highest levels of [DDT \(80-89hst.htm#DDT\)](#) ever reported. Best predictors of DDT exposure were amount of fish consumed and age of consumer.
- On the basis of 12,000 blood lead measurements made for [NHANES \(80-89hst.htm#NHANES\)](#) , identifies lead in gasoline as an important source of human exposure to lead.
- Demonstrates in Michigan that as commercial [PBB \(80-89hst.htm#PBB\)](#) mixture degraded in sunlight, its dioxin-like activity increased.

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## 1982 Highlights

- In collaboration with [ATSDR \(80-89hst.htm#ATSDR\)](#) and the state of Missouri, begins an evaluation of risks from dioxin in Times Beach and other contaminated sites in Missouri.
- Using data from [BDMP \(80-89hst.htm#BDMP\)](#) , leads the International Clearinghouse study of valproic acid, a drug used to control seizures. Results show an increased risk for spina bifida among children of women who

used valproic acid.

- Investigates premature breast development among young girls in Puerto Rico. Results eliminate hormones in meat as the likely cause, thereby reducing public concern on this issue.
- Coordinates the [CDC \(80-89hst.htm#CDC\)](#) / [NICHD \(80-89hst.htm#NICHD\)](#) workshop, held in Atlanta, on using vitamin supplements to prevent [NTD \(80-89hst.htm#NTD\)](#) s.
- Develops method for measuring urinary protoporphyrins.
- Works with [EPA \(80-89hst.htm#EPA\)](#) to enact regulations for removing lead from gasoline. Decision to remove lead was based largely on data compiled by [NCHS \(80-89hst.htm#NCHS\)](#) and [CEH \(80-89hst.htm#CEH\)](#) .

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## 1983 Highlights

- Congress mandates that the [CEH \(80-89hst.htm#CEH\)](#) group handling [CERCLA \(80-89hst.htm#CERCLA\)](#) (Superfund) activities be formed into a separate agency: Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).
- Enters into an agreement with the [VA \(80-89hst.htm#VA\)](#) to design and conduct epidemiologic studies related to the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam.
- Develops a method for measuring total [PCB \(80-89hst.htm#PCB\)](#) s and chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides in serum.
- Studies lead exposure among children living near smelters in Kellogg, Idaho, and Helena, Montana. The Kellogg site was declared an [EPA \(80-89hst.htm#EPA\)](#) Superfund clean-up site. Although smelters are closed, children in both areas are still
- Assigned responsibility for coordinating [CDC \(80-89hst.htm#CDC\)](#) 's emergency response plans.

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## 1984 Highlights

- Publishes Vietnam Veterans' Risk for Fathering Babies with Birth Defects, which indicates that Vietnam veterans are not at higher risk than other veterans or nonveterans of having children with birth defects.
- Begins [MADDs \(80-89hst.htm#MADDs\)](#) . Develops a method of conducting developmental disabilities surveillance by using school records. Produces first population-based prevalence data for mental retardation, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, and hearing
- Begins study to find causes of very-low-birth weight babies in Georgia.
- At the request of the Indian Government, acts as consultant in the aftermath of the Bhopal chemical release, one of the worst industrial disasters in history.

- Convenes, in Atlanta, the First National Environmental Health Conference.
- Develops a method of measuring dioxin in adipose tissue.
- Determines that unexplained deaths occurring in Pakistan were due to ingestion of endrin-contaminated food.
- Evaluates mercury exposure among people living with someone who works at a thermometer plant in Vermont.
- Evaluates lead exposure among people living near a secondary lead smelter in Idaho.

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## 1985 Highlights

- In collaboration with the California State Department of Health Services, investigates the exposure of some 400 people to a heroin substitute called [MPTP \(80-89hst.htm#MPTP\)](#), which was found to cause Parkinson's disease.
- Assigned responsibility within [HHS \(80-89hst.htm#HHS\)](#) (1) for reviewing the Army's plans for disposing of lethal chemical weapons and (2) for making recommendations for protecting public health and safety during disposal.
- Begins study of fetal damage caused by mothers' use of retinoic acid, a derivative of vitamin A used for skin problems. Results led manufacturer to begin more education programs for physicians and to institute surveillance for adverse reproductive outc
- Develops a method for measuring dioxin in serum.
- Studies human exposure to [PCB \(80-89hst.htm#PCB\)](#) s in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Finds that fish consumption is not a significant problem.
- Collaborates with Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences on an exposure assessment of children living near a copper smelter.
- Participates in the Laboratory Standardization Panel of [NCEP \(80-89hst.htm#NCEP\)](#) to develop national standards for improving measurements of cholesterol in clinical laboratories (1985 through 1990).

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## 1986 Highlights

- Convenes, in Denver, the Second National Environmental Health Conference.
- Participates on a panel to evaluate newly declassified data on radioiodine releases during the 1940s near the Hanford Nuclear facility in Washington. Panel recommends a study of thyroid disease in the area and a dose reconstruction project for all radionuclides for each year the facility operated.
- Establishes [ERCG \(80-89hst.htm#ERCG\)](#) to focus on planning for, and responding to, natural or technologic disasters and to act as interagency coordinator of federal agencies' responses to emergencies.

- Establishes [VSP \(80-89hst.htm#VSP\)](#) to meet [CEHIC \(80-89hst.htm#CEHIC\)](#)'s new responsibility for conducting sanitation inspections on cruise ships.
- Assigned responsibility, under The National Environmental Policy Act, for reviewing and commenting on federal Environmental Impact Statements on projects that have the potential to affect public health.
- Finds high correlation between serum dioxin levels and adipose dioxin levels across a wide range of human exposures to dioxin.
- Develops method for measuring mycotoxins in urine.
- Conducts health study of people exposed to dioxin in Missouri. Results show higher than background exposure but no persistent health effects. Exposure varies according to the source of exposure.
- Completes study of exposure to pesticides at the Hollywood Dump waste site in Tennessee. Finds no excessive exposure.
- Evaluates human exposure to heptachlor in Arkansas. Finds that residents who consumed dairy products had some elevated serum levels of heptachlor-related compounds.
- Studies children's exposure to chlorinated phenol near a chemical plant in Arkansas. Results show that study children did not have higher levels than a control group of children.
- Determines that unexplained deaths occurring in Sierra Leone were due to parathion-contaminated flour.

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## 1987 Highlights

- [CEH \(80-89hst.htm#CEH\)](#) renamed Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control.
- Given responsibility for nonoccupational injury control programs within the Public Health Service.
- Enters into an agreement with [ARC \(80-89hst.htm#ARC\)](#) to develop the Health Impact Surveillance System for Natural Disasters.
- Results of Agent Orange Validation Study show similar dioxin levels among veterans who were ground troops in Vietnam and veterans who did not serve in Vietnam.
- Begins study with [NIOSH \(80-89hst.htm#NIOSH\)](#) on morbidity and mortality among people occupationally exposed to dioxin.
- Establishes the [ME/C \(80-89hst.htm#ME/C\)](#) Information Sharing Program to improve the quality of data on death certificates and to increase the availability of those data for scientific research.
- Restructures [VSP \(80-89hst.htm#VSP\)](#) as a cooperative effort between industry and government. Publishes fee schedule for inspections in the Federal Register.
- Publishes study results that show a possible relationship between mothers' periconceptional use of multivitamins and a decrease in the risk for neural tube defects among their offspring.

- Completes The Vietnam Experience Study, an investigation into the long- term effects of military service on the health of Vietnam veterans. Results published in 1988.
- Publishes preliminary results of a study of Ranch Hands (veterans who sprayed Agent Orange in Vietnam). Some were unduly exposed to [TCDD \(80-89hst.htm#TCDD\)](#) . Study continues to 2002.
- Discovers that the half-life of TCDD in humans is more than 7 years.
- Evaluates the lead exposure of people living near mine tailings from a lead processing and smelting site in Colorado. Results show that 30 of the 259 whole blood samples tested had lead levels of 15 g/dL or higher.
- Develops and implements a quality assurance program for laboratories that use dried blood spots to screen newborns as part of the multiyear [HIV \(80-89hst.htm#HIV\)](#) seroprevalence survey among childbearing women.

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## 1988 Highlights

- Division of Chronic Disease Prevention joins with other components of [CDC \(80-89hst.htm#CDC\)](#) to form what is now the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.
- Convenes, in New Orleans, the Third National Environmental Health Conference.
- Assigned responsibility for a newly mandated disabilities prevention program.
- Awards the first [DPP \(80-89hst.htm#DPP\)](#) grants to nine states and four institutions for projects to prevent secondary disabilities.
- Contracts with [IOM \(80-89hst.htm#IOM\)](#) for a study on the nature of disability in America and methods of preventing disability.
- Congress asks [NRC \(80-89hst.htm#NRC\)](#) to review the injury control pilot program; NRC commends the accomplishments of the Division of Injury Epidemiology and Control and recommends that Congress provide more resources.
- Congress authorizes funds directly for the injury control program at CDC.
- Participates in CDC's new [WHO \(80-89hst.htm#WHO\)](#) Collaborating Center for Emergency Preparedness and Response.
- CDC formally adopts the emergency response plan developed by [CEHIC \(80-89hst.htm#CEHIC\)](#) .
- Develops a course on the medical management of chemical exposures and presents it to health care personnel in areas surrounding facilities that contain lethal chemical weapons.
- Coordinates, with international experts, the standardization of diagnostic criteria for Rett syndrome.
- Releases reports on the physical, psychological, and reproductive health of U.S. Vietnam veterans (Vietnam Experience Study). Finds that conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol abuse, and depression are somewhat more prevalent .

- Develops method for measuring coplanar polychlorinated biphenyls in serum.
- Begins ongoing studies with Italian Government on human exposure to dioxin among the population in Seveso, Italy, where an industrial explosion had occurred. Results to date show highest levels of dioxin ever measured in people. Except for chloracne, adverse health effects are not apparent. The possibility of cancer being a long-term outcome of such high exposure is still under evaluation.
- Investigates unexplained deaths of 23 young people in Malaysia. Finds that the cause is linked to aflatoxins associated with consumption of noodles.
- Establishes a network of cholesterol reference laboratories (10 domestic and 4 international) to improve the accuracy and precision of cholesterol measurements. Goal is to achieve the Healthy People 2000 objectives.
- Develops an immunology laboratory and also standards and standardization procedures to enable flow cytometry results from different laboratories to be directly compared and interpreted (continues to 1991).

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## 1989 Highlights

- Establishes national surveillance and conducts epidemiologic studies of the national epidemic of [EMS \(80-89hst.htm#EMS\)](#), which was linked to the ingestion of a food supplement containing L-tryptophan.
- Charged with directing the Congressionally mandated study of thyroid disease in Hanford, Washington.
- Assists in investigations in Puerto Rico and South Carolina after Hurricane Hugo. Results show that most deaths occur before a hurricane (from drownings due to flooding) or after a hurricane during clean-up (from, for example, puncture wounds, chain-saw lacerations, or electrocutions).
- Studies [ME/C \(80-89hst.htm#ME/C\)](#) data in South Carolina after Hurricane Hugo. Results show that no universally accepted definition of a hurricane-related death was used.
- Assigned [CDC \(80-89hst.htm#CDC\)](#)'s responsibility as the chief health agency for a national grant program to prevent childhood lead poisoning.
- [HHS \(80-89hst.htm#HHS\)](#) Secretary's Advisory Committee on Injury Prevention and Control is established.
- Sponsors first annual workshop for new state and local disability prevention projects.
- Is instrumental in establishing methods for monitoring Lewisite, a lethal chemical agent.
- Publishes results of a study on cocaine use during early pregnancy as a risk factor for congenital urogenital anomalies among offspring.
- Publishes results of a study, begun in 1985, of embryopathy caused by mothers' use of Accutane (a skin medication) during pregnancy.
- Releases report of the Agent Orange Validation Study, which showed no association between serum dioxin levels among U.S. Vietnam veterans and their various estimated levels of exposure while in Vietnam.
- Convenes, in San Antonio, the Fourth National Environmental Health Conference.

- With the California State Department of Health Services, investigates the possibility that food is contaminated with dioxin as a result of an industrial fire.
- Investigates human exposure to mirex near a chemical company in Ohio. Results show that consumption of farm products and employment at the chemical company are associated with higher-than-background levels of mirex.
- Studies chlordane exposure among people who consumed fish from areas for which fish consumption advisories had been issued. Eating such fish was not a major predictor of blood chlordane levels.
- Begins work to determine exposure to 12 pesticides of 1,000 people with no known exposure: a component of the Priority Toxicant Reference Range Study.
- Begins work to determine exposure to 32 [VOC \(80-89hst.htm#VOC\)](#) s of 1,000 people with no known exposure: another component of the Priority Toxicant Reference Range Study.
- With [ATSDR \(80-89hst.htm#ATSDR\)](#) , [ASTHO \(80-89hst.htm#ASTHO\)](#) , and other CDC organizational units, cosponsors the National Conference on Clustering of Health Events (Atlanta).
- Evaluates the significance of lead exposure from acid rain in Hawaii.
- Evaluates the effects of lead exposure from leaky mining trucks in Alaska. No children had blood lead levels higher than 15 g/dL, the standard for lead poisoning at that time.
- With [CAP \(80-89hst.htm#CAP\)](#) , conducts a collaborative study that identifies matrix effects as a major problem for clinical laboratories that measure blood cholesterol levels.

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## Abbreviations Expanded

**2,3,4-T** - 2,3,4-trichlorophenol

**2,4,5-T** - 2,4,5-trichlorophenol

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**AACC** - American Association for Clinical Chemistry

**AHA** - American Heart Association

**ARC** - American Red Cross

**ASTHO** - Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

**ATSDR** - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

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**BDDD** - Division of Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, NCEH

**BDMP** - Birth Defects Monitoring Program

**BDRFS** - Birth Defects Risk Factor Study

**BLLRS** - Blood Lead Laboratory Reference System

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**CAP** - College of American Pathologists  
**CDC** - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
**CEH** - Center for Environmental Health  
**CEHIC** - Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control  
**CERCLA** - Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act  
**CRMLN** - Cholesterol Reference Method Laboratory Network

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**DDT** - dichloro-diphenyl-trichloro ethane  
**DNA** - deoxyribonucleic acid  
**DOD** - Department of Defense  
**DOE** - Department of Energy  
**DPP** - Disabilities Prevention Program

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**EHHE** - Division of Environmental Hazards and Health Effects, NCEH  
**EHLS** - Division of Environmental Health Laboratory Sciences, NCEH  
**EMS** - Eosinophilia Myalgia Syndrome  
**EPA** - Environmental Protection Agency  
**EPO** - Epidemiology Program Office, CDC  
**ERCG** - Emergency Response Coordination Group

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**FAS** - fetal alcohol syndrome  
**FDA** - Food and Drug Administration

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**HDL** - high-density lipoprotein  
**HHS** - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
**HIV** - human immunodeficiency virus  
**HUD** - Department of Housing and Urban Development

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**IHS** - Indian Health Service  
**IOM** - Institute of Medicine

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**MACDP** - Metropolitan Atlanta Congenital Defects Program  
**MADDS** - Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities Study  
**ME/C** - medical examiner or coroner  
**MHPF** - Minority Health Professions Foundation

**MPTP** - methyl phenyl tetrahydropyridine  
**MTBE** - methyl tertiary butyl ether

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**NCCDPHP** - National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
**NCD** - National Council on Disabilities  
**NCEH** - National Center for Environmental Health  
**NCEHIC** - National Center for Environmental Health and Injury Control  
**NCEP** - National Cholesterol Education Program  
**NCHS** - National Center for Health Statistics  
**NCIPC** - National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
**NEI** - National Eye Institute  
**NICHHD** - National Institute for Child Health and Human Development  
**NIEHS** - National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences  
**NHANES** - National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (an ongoing series)  
**NHLBI** - National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, NIH  
**NIH** - National Institutes of Health  
**NIOSH** - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, CDC  
**NPS** - National Park Service  
**NRC** - National Research Council  
**NTD** - neural tube defect

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**PAH** - polyaromatic hydrocarbon  
**PAHO** - Pan American Health Organization  
**PAMM** - Program Against Micronutrient Malnutrition  
**PBB** - polybrominated biphenyl  
**PCB** - polychlorinated biphenyl  
**PHS** - Public Health Service

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**TCDD** - tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin  
**TOS** - toxic oil syndrome

**UNICEF** - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund  
**VA** - Veterans Administration  
**VOC** - volatile organic compound  
**VSP** - Vessel Sanitation Program  
**WHO** - World Health Organization

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